

*'A typical guy from Queens  
who loved his country'*

# Tony Acerra remembered for dedication to nation, family



By DCMA Public Affairs

**T**hose who knew him well say Tony Acerra will be remembered most for his dedication — both to the nation and his family.

“Tony had no other agenda with his work. He just wanted things to be done right,” said Dan Caterisano, Acerra’s friend and former supervisor.

Acerra’s passion for his work was only eclipsed by that for his family, including his wife and two children and extended family in his native Queens, N.Y., said Mike Taylor, Defense Contract Management Agency Syracuse director. “At work, he was all work. At home, he was all home.”

“Tony had a strong family behind him,” added Caterisano, DCMA Syracuse’s quality assurance group leader. “I don’t know how he would have done all that he did without their support.”

## A CIVILIAN HERO

Acerra was on his fifth deployment with DCMA when a convoy he was traveling in was attacked Oct. 29 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

“The loss of one of our own DCMA

family members saddens us all, but we will remember Tony’s dedication to this nation and the agency he served so well,” said DCMA Director Charlie E. Williams, Jr., who called Acerra a civilian hero.

A Navy veteran, Acerra had more than 30 years of federal service, the last 16 as a quality assurance representative with the agency. Taylor said his experience and commitment to providing the best support for U.S. service members made him valued and effective at home and in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

Taylor grew to know Acerra well, first working with him in Greenville, S.C., and later in New York. It was when inspecting aircraft together in Greenville that Taylor first took note of Acerra’s dedication. “Sometimes we had to pry Tony off the aircraft. He had such high standards and was tenacious in his job.”

This tenacity and dedication was a hallmark of Acerra’s work. He deployed in July from DCMA Syracuse to DCMA Central Afghanistan as an emergency essential QAR. He was serving as a principal expert on contingency operations contractor/supplier quality assurance and risk. He performed

quality assurance audits to monitor contract performance on numerous critical services under the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program.

On Oct. 29, Acerra was on the way to an audit. “Work was very important to Tony,” said Taylor. “He was doing the audit to protect our troops, so to him it was important enough to put his own life on the line.”

Acerra made an impression on most everyone he met. Staff members at the DCMA Combat Support Center said he always cared about his job, and was extremely passionate about Contingency Contract Administration Services.

## UNCOMPROMISING

Prior to deploying, Acerra was stationed at SKF Aeroengine in Falconer, N.Y. There, his quality assurance assignments included reviewing the manufacturing of bearings for aircraft, aircraft engines and components. Caterisano said Acerra approached even the smallest tasks with the same dedication. “He had a reputation among the contractors as being tough.”

Acerra’s love for his work in various



*A picture of Anthony A. "Tony" Acerra during his years of service in the U.S. Navy. (Photo courtesy of DCMA Syracuse)*

locations in the U.S. was evident, but he viewed his work overseas to be the most critical.

"Tony wanted to be over there with the military. He thought so much of what they do, and wanted to support them," said Caterisano. "He was completely dedicated to the CCAS mission, 100 percent. He was intrepid about this stuff."

Acerra received numerous awards for his civilian service, including the Distinguished Civilian Service Award, Exceptional Civilian Service Award and the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, which he received for a 2010 deployment to DCMA Southern Afghanistan.

There he performed more than 160 quality audits in multiple locations. His MCSA citation said Acerra's "technical writing skills were amazing and his findings indisputable." The award

recognized his "uncompromising audits", "exceptional performance" and "vigilance" for improving the quality of life of personnel and avoiding excess costs.

Acerra was motivated by a deep patriotism, and carried personal business cards showing the World Trade Center and an American flag. Caterisano said, "Tony was a typical guy from Queens who loved his country."

It was those in uniform, however, who most inspired Acerra. Of all the recognition he had received for his 2010 deployment, Caterisano said the one Acerra treasured most was a simple certificate of appreciation from an Army cavalry squadron. "His heart was with the troops and it meant everything for him to receive recognition from them."

## REMEMBERED

Acerra endeared himself to those with whom he worked. An online remembrance page quickly filled with comments from those who knew him, at home and on deployment.

Acerra had an incessant smile and firm handshake, said Scott Shammo, DCMA Central Afghanistan chief of staff. "Tony and I worked closely, both at home and overseas, and his desire to accomplish DCMA's mission and to provide for the warfighter was second to no one."


He felt "like a lifelong friend" after just

a few months, said Air Force Col. Michael Lund, DCMA Afghanistan theater counsel.

"Everybody knew Tony and couldn't help but like him. He made it seem so natural to be able to connect with people. He will be sorely missed."

Friends and coworkers in Afghanistan honored Acerra as part of a Nov. 2 Fallen Comrade Ceremony, attended by U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker, Army Gen. John Allen, Army Lt. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, Army Maj. Gen. Daniel Allyn, Army Brig. Gen. John Hammond and Army Brig. Gen. Ross Ridge.

At home, DCMA employees, friends and family members attended a memorial service held Nov. 17 in Erie, Pa.

The American flag at the DCMA headquarters in Fort Lee, Va., was flown at half-staff in Acerra's honor on Nov. 8, the day he was laid to rest by his family in Queens, N.Y. 

## Chronology of Significant Awards

- Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom (pending approval)
- NATO Meritorious Service Medal (pending approval)
- Distinguished Civilian Service Award (awarded posthumously)
- NATO Medal and Certificate 2011
- DCMA Meritorious Civilian Service Award 2011
- Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) Medal and Certificate 2008
- DCMA Exceptional Civilian Service Award 2005



*Boots stand out as a reminder of the four U.S. soldiers and Anthony A. "Tony" Acerra during a memorial ceremony in Afghanistan. Patriotic tributes to the fallen, ceremonies like these date back to the American Civil War. Today, it is a way for unit members to show respect for the fallen. (Photo courtesy of DCMA Afghanistan)*